



## Influence of professional motivation and digital competence on teachers' career satisfaction

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### Abstract

This study aims to examine the factors affecting teachers' professional motivation and career satisfaction based on their perspectives, with a specific focus on the influence of digital competencies. A teacher's ability to develop a positive attitude toward their profession and achieve their personal career goals is a situation that affects the efficiency of education for both themselves and their students. The study uses a qualitative, phenomenological design, with participants comprising 11 teachers from various subjects and school levels, selected through maximum variation sampling, a purposeful sampling method. According to the findings derived from teachers' feedback, the attitudes of school administrators, colleagues, and parents have both positive and negative impacts on teachers' motivation and career satisfaction. Teachers primarily attribute their motivation to internal factors and note their efforts to develop digital competencies, ensuring they remain adaptable to the evolving demands of the digital age in education. It has been observed that teachers' professional motivation is influenced by several factors, including their income levels, the adequacy of the school's physical environment, communication with administrators and colleagues, student motivation, and their own passion for the profession. Since teachers view their profession not merely as a job but as a mission and social duty, they tend to associate career satisfaction with their ability to contribute to students' growth, inspire them, and make a lasting impact on their lives, rather than with higher salaries or social status. Additionally, societal perspectives and political policies shape how teachers perceive their profession as a long-term career.

**Keywords:** Career satisfaction, Digital competence, Motivation.

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### Contribution of this paper to the literature

This study explores factors influencing teachers' motivation and career satisfaction, emphasizing digital competencies. A qualitative study involving 11 teachers reveals that internal factors primarily drive teacher motivation. They view their profession as a mission, adapting their digital skills to meet evolving educational demands.

## 1. Introduction

Teachers are the fundamental elements of education and the determinants of education quality. Teachers' career satisfaction is related to their general job satisfaction with their professional experiences (Huo & Jiang, 2021; Lounsbury et al., 2003). In a way, it refers to the internal evaluation of career outcomes that reflect their general satisfaction with their career experiences. At the same time, teacher career satisfaction is an important factor affecting teachers' professional commitment and development. Increasing satisfaction increases teachers' general job motivation and reduces their intention to leave (Sun et al., 2022). In addition, low career satisfaction increases teachers' intention to leave (Räsänen, Pietarinen, Pyhältö, Soini, & Väisänen, 2020; Shah & Jumani, 2015). Although the intention to leave does not always result in an actual leave, it may reflect a low level of job satisfaction (Saeed, Waseem, Sikander, & Rizwan, 2014).

The concept of career is used quite frequently in every profession, and until recently, when people thought of career, they usually only thought of a high salary and high social status. However, today, the meaning of "career" has changed considerably. Different types of successful career definitions have emerged due to the significant differences in the success people perceive in their careers. Career success is not limited to traditional indicators such as salary and promotion but is also associated with a number of factors such as education, intelligence, personality, motivation, family situation, gender, career strategies, and mentoring relationships (Heslin, 2005).

Greenhaus, Parasuraman, and Wormley (1990) stated that achieving goals in five basic areas is important for a person's career satisfaction. These include professional achievements, general professional advancement, financial goals, advancements in assignment and promotion, and advancements in skills. The person's success in achieving these basic goals plays a determining role in career satisfaction.

The teacher's ability to develop a positive attitude toward his profession and achieve his personal career goals is a situation that affects the efficiency of education not only for himself but also for the students. Since teachers participate in educational activities together with students, every situation that affects the teacher reflects positively or negatively on the implementation of the educational process. High motivation of teachers to learn is a basic condition for teacher learning and successful professional development (Shulman & Shulman, 2004). However, teachers' motivation to improve themselves may not always be high on their own. Teachers' previous experiences, teaching experience, self-efficacy, learning beliefs, emotional pressure, and leadership attitudes of principals all affect the professional learning motivation (Zhang, Admiraal, & Saab, 2021). Increasing the motivation of teachers is a critical factor for the success of the education system. Focusing education policies on supporting teachers, professional development opportunities, and improving working conditions will play an important role in ensuring these positive effects.

According to Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2019) teachers' skills, motivations, and attitudes significantly influence how information and communication technologies (ICTs) are implemented in the classroom and, consequently, affect students' ability to maximize the benefits of these new technologies. In 2013, the European Commission Thematic Working Group published a final report titled "Teacher Professional Development" on the development of teacher competences for better learning outcomes. In this report, the teaching profession is defined as "a career-long endeavor involving complex and dynamic combinations of knowledge, skills, understanding, values, and attitudes; their acquisition and development require careful, purposeful application and high-quality feedback" (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2018). The report recognizes the quality of teaching as one of the key factors in ensuring positive educational outcomes for students. Therefore, it is crucial for teachers to consistently enhance their skills throughout their careers and, above all, maintain their motivation to teach.

Academic studies to determine the characteristics of professional development that enhance student success date back to 1995 (Corcoran, 1995). Despite many studies in this process, a clear consensus has not been reached among researchers. However, recent studies have reached a common view that professional development should be sustainable, collaborative, encouraging teacher participation, focused on the subject, utilizing external experts, and practice-based in order to increase student success (Sims & Fletcher-Wood, 2021). These findings show that effective professional development practices have a high potential to improve student success.

The integration of technology into education is a crucial process for the professional development of educators. Ertmer (1999) identified two main challenges to the successful use of technology in educational environments. Factors related to equipment, resources, and external training are classified as first-degree barriers, while internal factors, such as attitudes, beliefs, confidence, and skills, are considered second-degree barriers (Winter, Costello, O'Brien, & Hickey, 2021). Bingimlas (2009) states that various barriers that prevent the successful integration of ICT in education are due to multifaceted factors such as teachers' technology use skills, lack of infrastructure, curriculum incompatibilities, lack of administrative support, and traditional approaches in teaching methods.

The advancement of new technologies in the twenty-first century has made the use of technology in educational settings almost mandatory for curricula focusing on digital problem-solving skills. As the primary players in the education system, students and teachers need to be ready for these developments. Teachers' attitudes towards technology play a critical role in the acceptance and adoption of ICT. Research shows that teachers' attitudes towards ICT positively affect the use of technology in the classroom (Scherer, Tondeur, Siddiq, & Baran, 2018). Therefore, it is important for teachers to develop positive attitudes toward technology in order to increase technology integration in education.

## 2. Literature Review

Motivation is the internal desire of an employee to do a job; motivating is making an employee willing to do the job through an external influence. Motivation is defined by Luthans (1989) as the management process of influencing behavior based on knowledge of what motivates people (Tella, Ayeni, & Popoola, 2007).

Scholars have presented various theories and approaches to define motivation, both psychologically and physiologically. Therefore, it is a primary concept for those in roles that involve mobilizing others, such as managers, teachers, religious leaders, coaches, healthcare providers, and parents (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Motivation is among the five basic abilities that Goleman defined in the context of social intelligence: "self-awareness, self-regulation, understanding the emotions of others (empathy), and social skills" (Turan, 2015).

### *2.1. Teacher Motivation*

The importance of teacher motivation research is also obvious because student motivation is a very important factor that is closely related to a number of variables in education, such as educational reform, teaching practice, and teachers' psychological satisfaction and well-being. Although teacher motivation stems from the intrinsic values of teaching, it can be affected by various factors. Numerous studies have shown that teachers experience higher occupational stress and lower motivation than other professions (Han & Yin, 2016). Dörnyei and Ushioda (2021) identified five categories of factors that reduce teacher motivation: stress, restrictions on teacher autonomy, insufficient self-efficacy, inadequate career structures, repetitive content, and limited intellectual development potential. The psychological processes underlying teacher motivation are often hindered by numerous environmental and organizational issues, making it difficult to achieve desired goals in teaching (Bennell, 2004). Research on teacher motivation has shown that there is a close relationship between teacher motivation and student learning, and teaching behaviors or styles mediate the effect of teacher motivation on student motivation (Han & Yin, 2016). In the literature, Praver and Oga-Baldwin (2008) classify teacher motivation into direct motivators (intrinsic and extrinsic motivation) and indirect motivators (autonomy, working relationships, self-actualization, and institutional support), while Dinham and Scott (2000) classify them as micro- and macro-contextual factors. These categories were later redefined by Dörnyei and Ushioda (2021) as school-based external factors and systemic/societal level factors.

### *2.2. Career*

An individual's career is not limited to a specific period of their life; rather, it is a phenomenon that evolves through different stages and changes over time throughout their entire life. There are various interpretations of the concept of career. According to Greenhaus et al. (1990) a career is defined in two ways in literature. The first definition refers to the quality of a profession or organization or the individual's position within that profession or organization. The second definition focuses on the individual's traits. According to another definition, a career is a process shaped by work experience and activities, guided by personal and organizational goals, which the individual can partially control and continues to pursue throughout their life (Orpen, 1994).

### *2.3. Career Satisfaction*

Career satisfaction was assessed by Greenhaus et al. (1990) in five main areas depending on the level of goal attainment:

1. Professional achievements.
2. General professional goals.
3. Income-related goals.
4. Professional development.
5. Learning new skills.

The success of the individual in achieving these basic goals plays a decisive role in career satisfaction (Yüksel, 2005). The teaching profession is regarded as one of the most sacred professions, as it plays a crucial role in shaping the generations that will define the future of society. Education systems face various challenges in order to provide employment for qualified professionals in the increasingly competitive labor market. The availability of a sufficient number of qualified teachers is a major concern, especially in OECD countries. Teacher salaries and working conditions are factors that greatly affect the career choices of potential teachers (OECD, 2005). Starting salaries and wage scales can either decrease or increase interest in the teaching profession. In addition, the cost of becoming a teacher plays an important role when compared to other highly skilled professions.

### *2.4. Digital Competence*

The ability to use digital tools is now seen as a central competence at all levels of society, and a number of initiatives are being undertaken to develop a common understanding of the concept of digital competence (Instefjord, 2015). Research on teachers' access to and effective use of digital technologies has revealed significant differences. Researchers in the field of Technology and Teacher Education continue to note that prospective teachers are not prepared to teach with technology when they enter the classroom (Foulger, Graziano, Schmidt-Crawford, & Slykhuis, 2017).

Students are growing up in a world driven by technology, and teachers need to adapt to this changing environment (Janet & Genelyn, 2024). The novelty of using technology in schools and higher education, as in the 1970s and 1990s, is now a thing of the past, and students are becoming more critical users of technology in the classroom. Higher-order thinking skills such as critical thinking, problem solving, and decision-making; productivity, innovation, creativity, collaboration and communication skills, lifelong learning, information and communication technology literacy; and personal and social responsibility are included in the literature as 21st-century skills. In this century, teachers need to have qualities such as flexibility, adaptability, collaboration, creativity and innovation, lifelong learning, and pedagogical expertise to increase student success (Janet & Genelyn, 2024).

## **3. Methodology and Data Analysis**

### *3.1. Purpose of Research*

The purpose of this research is to examine the relationship between teachers' professional motivation and career satisfaction and to gain insight into the role of digital competence in this relationship. By evaluating the current situation, the study aims to gain a comprehensive understanding of potential obstacles that may negatively impact both motivation and career satisfaction. In this context, the research offers valuable insights into the development of educational policies and professional development programs.

### *3.2. Research Questions*

1. What are the factors that affect teachers' professional motivation?
2. What are the factors that affect teachers' perceptions of career satisfaction?
3. Does digital competence have a positive contribution to career development and professional motivation in terms of professional development?

### *3.3. Methodology*

The study employed a phenomenological design, a qualitative research method that focuses on exploring phenomena we are aware of, but with the aim of gaining a deeper and more detailed understanding. The goal of this design is to uncover the essence of the experiences of individuals who have encountered a specific phenomenon (Creswell, 2018). Because they are qualitative, phenomenological studies may not give us clear or general results. However, they do give us useful examples, explanations, and first-hand accounts that help us understand the phenomenon better (Yildirim & Simsek, 2013).

### *3.4. Research Group*

The basic data collection tool in phenomenological studies is the interview (Yildirim & Simsek, 2013). The study group consists of 11 teachers working in official elementary, secondary, and high schools affiliated with the Ministry of National Education in Turkey during the 2023-2024 academic year. The research group was formed using maximum variation sampling, a purposive sampling method. When employing this method, it is important not to generalize to the entire population but to identify similarities across different situations. In this study, care was taken to select teachers with diverse demographic characteristics, as well as varying levels of digital competence, motivation, and career satisfaction. Efforts were made to include teachers from schools at different educational levels, situated in regions with varying socio-economic backgrounds in Ankara, Turkey. The participants in the study are indicated as T1, T2, and T11. Table 1 provides the demographic variables of the teachers who participated in the study.

### *3.5. Qualitative Data Collection Tools*

In collecting qualitative data, a semi-structured interview form was used, which was prepared by the researcher himself and finalized after receiving expert opinions (1 educational management faculty member, 1 measurement and evaluation expert, 2 language experts, and 3 expert teachers). In the interview form, which was prepared and for which the necessary permissions were obtained, four open-ended questions were asked of teachers, as well as demographic information. The researcher recorded the teachers' responses using a voice recorder with their consent.

### *3.6. Validity and Reliability*

In qualitative research, four criteria were used to determine the reliability of the results: internal validity, external validity, internal reliability, and external reliability. Internal validity indicates the adequacy of the process followed in reaching the research results in revealing the studied reality; external validity indicates the transferability of the obtained results to similar groups or environments; internal reliability indicates whether other researchers can reach the same results using the same data; and external reliability indicates whether the research results can be obtained in the same way in similar environments (Yildirim & Simsek, 2013). In this research, internal validity was ensured by sharing the interview summaries with the participants after obtaining their approval and gathering their feedback on the accuracy of the summaries. For external validity, the variables that were part of the questions that the participants were asked about were given in-depth conceptual explanations. This approach aimed to guarantee the research's limited generalizability. Instead of the concept of reliability, which emphasizes repeatability in quantitative research, the concept of consistency is suggested for a qualitative research (Yildirim & Simsek, 2013). For this purpose, interviews were conducted with participants using consistent approaches. The researcher documented notes, inferences, and reports, which were securely stored for future reference.

### *3.7. Data Analysis*

In the study, four open-ended questions were asked of the participants, and their opinions were obtained verbally. The researcher used a voice recorder to record the oral interviews and then transcribed. The open-ended questions asked of the teachers are as follows:

- 1) What are the positive and negative factors that affect your professional motivation?
- 2) What are the positive and negative factors that affect your career development?
- 3) Do you think that increasing your digital competence will positively affect your career in terms of professional development?
- 4) Do you think that increasing your digital competence will positively affect your motivation for the teaching profession?

The research data were analyzed using the descriptive analysis method. There is less descriptive analysis than content analysis, it is used when the conceptual structure of the research is known ahead of time (Yildirim & Simsek, 2013).

The verbal responses of the teachers to the semi-structured interview form were shared as direct quotes. The analysis was carried out in three stages. First, all the responses given by each participant to the questions were listed under the relevant question. Next, the code and frequency (f) values of the responses were determined. Since quality is given more importance than quantity in qualitative research, researchers evaluate the density and significance of a code according to its frequency of occurrence (Miles & Huberman, 2016). After the codes were created, they were reviewed and finalized. The determined categories, which were created by grouping the codes, were grouped under positive and negative themes as in the first and second interview questions. The themes in the third and fourth questions were determined according to the categories obtained.

**Table 1.** Demographic variables of teachers participating in research.

<b>Participants</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>School</b>	<b>Seniority</b>	<b>Branch</b>	<b>Education level</b>	<b>Title</b>
T1	Female	Elementary school	11-20 year	Elementary teacher	Master's degree	Expert teacher
T2	Male	High school	21-30 year	Mathematics teachers	Master's degree	Expert teacher
T3	Male	Secondary school	11-20 year	Mathematics teachers	Master's degree	Expert teacher
T4	Male	Secondary school	11-20 year	Mathematics teachers	Master's degree	Expert teacher
T5	Male	High school	21-30 year	Information technologies teachers (ITT)	Bachelor's degree	Expert teacher
T6	Female	Secondary school	11-20 year	English teachers	Bachelor's degree	Expert teacher
T7	Female	Elementary school	21-30 year	Elementary teacher	Bachelor's degree	Expert teacher
T8	Male	Secondary school	21-30 year	Turkish teachers	Master's degree	Expert teacher
T9	Female	High school	0-10 year	English teachers	Bachelor's degree	Teacher
T10	Female	Secondary school	0-10 year	English teachers	Bachelor's degree	Teacher
T11	Female	Secondary school	0-10 year	Science teachers	Master's degree	Expert teacher

## 4. Findings

### 4.1. Findings on Positive and Negative Factors Affecting Professional Motivation

The themes, categories, and codes derived from the participants' views on their professional motivations are given in Table 2. The study asked teachers to identify factors that positively and negatively influence their professional motivation. The responses were grouped into two themes: positive and negative. Four categories emerged under the positive theme: student motivation, professional motivation, communication with colleagues, and communication with school administration.

**Table 2.** Themes, categories and codes for positive and negative factors affecting professional motivation.

Themes	Categories	Codes	f
Positive	Student motivation	Student success	5
		Quality communication with the student	5
	Professional motivation	Love the profession	3
		Enthusiasm	2
		Sacred	2
	Colleague communication	Meeting with colleague	3
		Branch teachers	3
	School administrator communication	Appreciation	4
		Positive attitude	4
	Negative	School as a working environment	Turn of duty
Technological infrastructure			3
Class size			2
Physical structure of the school			2
Negative attitudes of the school administration			4
Communication with student's parents		Expectations of the student's parents	4
		Student's parents' attitudes	2
Unique features of the profession		Burnout	2
		Difficulty of the branch	3
		Shortage of teachers	2
Teaching profession as status		Financial	3
		Respect	3
Education problems		Curriculum	2
		Problems with education	2

According to the answers obtained, it was seen that the most common opinion in the positive theme was “quality communication with students,” and “student success” obtained from the student motivation category. Sample responses, along with the codes derived from the teachers' opinions, are provided below:

T6: *Of course, the main reason that affects our motivation is the interest and attitude of our students towards the lesson. The more the student participates and is active in the lesson, the happier the teacher will be.*

T8: *Being able to touch the soul of a child, to enable a child who may have never seen sincere love to experience that love, and to set a sacred purpose for humanity and all living things in front of him/her are my most important sources of motivation.*

Teachers also responded to the positive theme, expressing their value in receiving appreciation from school administrators.

T11: *My students' successes motivate me the most but being appreciated and rewarded are also nice and positive things for me.*

The research teachers stressed the importance of communication with colleagues and a love for the profession, which boosts their school well-being:

T7: *I see and talk to my friends in the cluster more at school. That's why working with them and doing the same job is actually good. When we have a problem, I can share it. When it's come to students or personal matters, my colleagues motivate me at school.*

T5: *If I were to say it's a positive motivation, it's the love for this profession despite everything.*

From the teacher responses given in the study, it was seen that the factors that negatively affect motivation are related to parents and school administration:

T1: *On the negative side, unfortunately, the parents' attitude towards us as teachers, the fact that they see us as having a different profession rather than being teachers, and they act as if we are just babysitting the children at that moment, really upsets us. In education and training, of course, we are responsible for teaching the student everything until the end, but unfortunately, parents can exaggerate this limit a little and behave differently.*

T8: *First, the parent attitude. The spoiled parent profile who does not take any responsibility for their child's education and thinks that the teacher has a magic wand in his hand... Parents' expectations are very high; this puts a lot of pressure on the teacher... Incompetent administrators. Administrators who should not enter the door of any school, who cannot teach, who cannot establish healthy communication with students, who only care about advancing their position, and who are crazy about procedures... Both I and many of my teacher friends around me are experiencing burnout syndrome. There are many more factors that negatively affect motivation.*

Some of the responses indicating how teachers are negatively affected by issues specific to the teaching profession are provided below.

T5: *There are many motivational issues such as administrative problems, teachers' competence/incompetence, negative parent behaviors, student-centered problems, etc., but I see these as secondary problems. In my opinion, the issue that has the most negative impact on my motivation is the one I mentioned earlier: not trusting teachers, not paying attention, not caring, and not making them feel valuable.*

Problems or difficulties experienced in the school environment also negatively affect teachers' motivation. Some of the responses on this subject are given below:

T2: *The number of students in classes. The number of classes and the quality of teachers, of course, affect this. The physical environment is essential. So, we can say this at the beginning: from the cleanliness of common areas, sinks to the cleanliness of the physical environment, the class, the number of staff, the number of assistants in the school, whether there is a technological tool, computer, or smart board, all of these should be evaluated in a process from beginning to end. The lack or absence of these are, of course, things that will affect your motivation.*

T10: *The factors that negatively affect my motivation are the crowded classes and school.*

#### 4.2. Findings on Positive and Negative Factors Affecting Career Advancement

The themes, categories, and codes obtained from the participants' views on their career progression are given in Table 3. In the second question posed to the teachers participating in the research, they were asked to evaluate the factors that positively and negatively impact their career advancement. The positive themes identified included factors such as a master's or doctorate degree and professional passion, while the negative themes encompassed obstructive factors and challenges related to viewing teaching as a career.

**Table 3.** Themes, categories and codes for positive and negative factors affecting career advancement.

Themes	Categories	Codes	f
Positive	Master's degree and PhD	Self-improvement	3
		Useful	3
	Professional passion	Feeling happy	2
		Appreciation	2
		New experiences	2
Negative	Hindering factors	Family problems	2
		Difficulty of the tasks	3
		Limited opportunities	3
	Teaching as a career	Administrative and political	3
		Career ladder	2
		Teaching is not seen as a career profession	3

It was observed that the biggest factor in teachers' orientation towards doing a master's degree or doctorate under the positive theme was that they thought that self-development would be positive for their careers and also beneficial for their profession. Some responses regarding teachers' views on this issue are given below:

T3: *I have a master's degree. I am someone who constantly tries to improve myself, who constantly tries to get online training, and who attends seminars and conferences. In other words, it has changed my perspective a lot. In other words, I can see myself making progress with these changes. I see that I do some things better.*

Additionally, teachers expressed that their love for the profession is a source of happiness, and they believe that being helpful to their students is a key indicator of career success:

T7: *If I am happy with my students, I say I am a competent teacher. In their eyes, being a good teacher means doing good things in your career, I think.*

T9: *Loving the profession we practice, seeing ourselves as perfect for it, and being happy to go to work every day are actually important factors that enable us to think about career advancement.*

It was observed that the underlying cause of teachers' negative views about their careers stemmed from the belief that teaching is not regarded as a professional career by society:

T7: *In daily life, I don't think anyone takes into account the career progression of teachers. In everyone's eyes, a teacher is just a teacher...*

T8: *There is no career in teaching even the administrators are still considered teachers according to the law. Even if you are an administrator, nothing changes. The lack of career advancement is one of the most important factors that causes loss of motivation.*

Among the negative factors, teachers stated that there are some obstacles from their families or institutions that prevent them from pursuing higher education or receiving education:

T6: *As for the factors that affect my career progression, as a teacher and also a mother, I have many responsibilities at home and with a younger daughter, so I cannot attend in-service training seminars or other trainings due to the time constraints or other reasons. But I would like to attend...*

T11: *For example, limited opportunities, such as my inappropriate course schedule for my PhD, can make it difficult for me to progress.*

However, some non-personal or organizational issues also hinder teachers' career advancement:

T9: *If the administrators with different political views who come to power in the country act fairly towards each individual, this will prevent all citizens in the society from despairing in their career advancement.*

T4: *The fact that the curriculum is restrictive, that it limits you on the subjects, that you are trying to complete certain subjects, prevents you from deciding on the subject and doing in-depth study. These are the negative aspects.*

#### 4.3. Findings on the Positive Effects of Increasing Digital Competence on Teachers' Careers in Terms of Professional Development

The themes, categories, and codes obtained from the participants' views on the positive effects of increasing digital competence on their career advancement in terms of professional development are given in Table 4. In the third question posed to the teachers participating in the study, they were asked to share their opinions on the positive impact of enhancing digital competence on their career advancement, particularly in terms of professional development. In this context, under the theme of the necessity of the digital age, the categories of preparation for the lesson and the process of expression and professional development were identified. Under the theme of the importance of digital competence, the categories of communication with students and academic development were determined.

**Table 4.** Themes, categories and codes for the positive effects of increasing digital competence on teachers' careers in terms of professional development.

Themes	Categories	Codes	f
Necessity of the digital age	Lesson preparation-lecture process	Practical	8
		Interesting, fun	5
		Can be lazy	2
	Professional development	Job satisfaction	2
		Being inadequate in the eyes of the student	3
The importance of digital competence	Communication with students	Digital native-immigrant	4
		Technology is also used in daily life	3
	Academic development	Beneficial for academic development	6
		Cooperation	4

The codes that were analyzed under the theme of “necessity in the digital age” showed that teachers thought that main reason people needed to be digitally competent was so they could use technology in the classroom. Some of the responses reflecting the teachers' views on this matter are provided below.

T8: *Beyond that, is it possible not to use technology in class preparation and during class? I don't think so. Thanks to technological developments, we can make many subjects that were intangible when we first started our careers tangible. Moreover, this saves us a lot of time. I now use ChatGPT for class preparation. ChatGPT does the preparation in a few minutes that I would do in a few hours.*

Additionally, research shows that teachers feel prepared and experience professional satisfaction:

T1: *I think that this issue will definitely reflect on the career. I also think like this. When you reach professional competence and satisfaction, I think these are necessary. I think it will have a more positive effect on our career.*

T3: *Of course, there are times when only you are capable of completing a task. For example, it is asked of only you because you have received that training. Therefore, your self-confidence also increases; in a way, I think it is necessary for professional satisfaction.*

The analysis of the codes under the theme of the importance of the digital age revealed that teachers considered the greatest factor in the necessity of digital competence to be its significant benefits for their academic development:

T4: *Now I am doing a master's degree in measurement. After developing certain measurement stages, you need to obtain statistics and data related to them. You also need to use technology for this. Of course I use them in this sense. Of course it has advantages.*

Students' digital tendencies in the digital age are noted by teachers, who emphasize that they should also keep up:

T6: *Children today already know; as teachers, we need to know too.*

T7: *I do not want to appear inadequate in the eyes of students.*

T8: *Not being aware of the technological developments that your students are so involved with will weaken your bond with them and negatively affect the way your students view you.*

#### 4.4. Findings on the Positive Effects of Increasing Digital Competence on Motivation for the Teaching Profession

The themes, categories, and codes obtained from the participants' views on the positive effects of increasing digital competence on their motivation for the teaching profession are given in Table 5. In the fourth question posed to the teachers, they were asked to share their opinions on how enhancing their digital competence positively impacts their motivation toward the teaching profession. In this context, under the theme of the course, the categories of student motivation, programs and tools used, and activities were identified. Under the theme of administrator and colleague, the categories of cooperation with administrators and cooperation with colleagues were determined. The personal themes established the categories of in-service training and digital aptitude.

**Table 5.** Themes, categories and codes for the positive effects of increasing digital competence on motivation for the teaching profession.

Themes	Categories	Codes	f
Lesson	Student motivation	Useful	6
		Interest in the lesson	4
		Fun	4
	Programs and tools used	EBA (Education information network), OBA (Teacher information network)	3
		Phone, tablet	2
		Interactive whiteboard	5
		Applications	5
	Activities	Listening, speaking, word	4
		Virtual trip	2
		Solving questions	3
		Coding	2
		Presentation	4
		Game	3
Graph or angle drawing		3	
School administrator and colleague	Communication with school administrators	Technology competence of managers	3
		Compatibility with admin	4
	Communication with colleagues	Solidarity	6
		Compatibility with colleague	5
Personal	In-service training	The training received is useful	6
		The training received is not effective	3
	Digital aptitude	Learning is important and feels good	9

Based on the codes learned in the course theme, it was found that student motivation was the most important factor in teachers' digital competence growth in terms of their motivation to stay in the teaching profession. Some responses regarding the teachers' views on this subject are given below:

T4: *For example, when I play a math game in class, students' participation in the lesson increases significantly. This positively affects my motivation to be a teacher.*

T8: *Frankly, anything that makes me think that I am more useful to my students increases my motivation. The use of every digital platform in the course increases the student's interest in it.*

Teachers who highlighted the variety and usability of applications emphasized the usefulness of digital competence in the classroom:

T8: *The lessons are more fun. Although what we can do is limited compared to other branches, I am a Turkish teacher, but I still try to use it as much as possible. Let me give a few examples: Let's say we are studying a subject about professions that are on the verge of extinction. In the lesson, we can connect to a tile master in Bursa, Iznik, via video from the smart board, and both have a conversation with him and watch a tile being made. Or, in the national culture theme, we can visit Gobeklitepe in a virtual environment without going there. I'm not even talking about the convenience of presentations in transferring information; they are very classic now. We already use them.*



Teachers who consider themselves digitally competent say this helps them communicate with colleagues and administrators:

T3: *They may ask me for some work. Since I can do it, I will help. It contributes in that way. Positive, I mean, why, for example, we did not have an assistant principal at one point; he had left the school, and they couldn't prepare the course schedule. I had used that program before, I knew it. For example, I was even preparing the course schedules in those schools I worked at.*

T10: *I believe that when we, as a group, exchange information on this issue, it will contribute to our development and create a positive communication environment.*

Additionally, some teachers shared that they believe administrators, whom they perceive as having low technology competence, do not always have a positive view of digital technology and hold certain biases, though they do not generalize this to all administrators:

T1: *Also, now we tell our principal; we say we will use this, but he does not know. In other words, he does not know that program and tells us that we do not have it, or we cannot use it, and it affects us; it puts us down. So, this definitely contributes to our communication.*

T4: *The perspective of the principal or other teacher friends on this issue is crucial. In other words, if they do not have in-depth knowledge of this issue, they may also label you as if you are disrupting the class. They may also perceive these as empty games.*

According to general research, teachers who possess strong digital competence exhibit personal inclination towards technology. It can be said that they are keen on using new technological tools and receiving training in this subject. It can be concluded that dealing with technology through their own means or as a result of training makes them feel good:

T3: *I do things like this, or, for example, I learned how to make an application on Android because it was my own interest... For example, it asks children about addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division, and it scores them randomly and attracts their attention they can play it on their phones and tablets.*

T7: *We are in the digital age. Being able to use technology makes me feel good, strengthens my self-confidence, and I feel good when I use it in class.*

However, there is no consensus on the effectiveness of education:

T3: *You know, but of course this was something I was doing as a hobby. I just tried to adapt it to mathematics. For example, I had made a program, and I had learned the training for this program from ÖBA, from our own national education training.*

T7: *I tried to get training on using technology, but if you ask me if it was beneficial for me, I don't think so. I think distance training is not very effective.*

## 5. Results

### 5.1. Implications from Research

The study asked teachers to categorize the factors that affect their professional motivation as positive or negative. Based on the responses, the most common views in the theme positively influencing teachers' motivation were "quality communication with students" and "student success," both of which were derived from the student motivation category. In addition, being appreciated by school administrators was seen as a desired and expected situation by teachers. Teachers who communicated with their colleagues at school stated that they saw this as a good source of motivation for them, and thus their sense of belonging to the school increased.

The study's teachers reported that parents and school administration were the factors most negatively affecting motivation. Teachers reported that parents' behaviors, which sometimes treat them as babysitters, have a demotivating effect. Additionally, school administrators' excessive workload occasionally undermines teachers' motivation.

The teachers who participated in the study were asked to evaluate the factors that positively and negatively affect their career advancement. In this context, it was found that the primary factor driving teachers to pursue a master's or doctorate degree under the positive theme was their belief that self-development benefits both their careers and their professional growth. Career advancement in the teaching profession is often associated with obtaining a master's or doctorate, rather than moving up through career steps. The knowledge gained through higher education is seen as highly valuable and motivational.

Additionally, the most striking finding of this study is that teachers emphasized their profession is not merely a duty but a result of their passion, which can be interpreted as intrinsic motivation. They even described being helpful to their students and society as a key indicator of career success in itself.

Teachers' negative views about their careers stem from their belief that society does not view teaching as a professional career. The teachers who participated in the study expressed the opinion that the career advancement structure in Turkey, which mainly involves wage differences and obtaining titles, differs significantly from the career progression found in other professions.

Teachers have observed that personal or organizational obstacles preventing them from pursuing higher education or professional training negatively impact their career advancement. Challenges such as family responsibilities, school workload, or the negative attitudes of administrators diminish teachers' motivation to further develop themselves.

The study asked participating teachers to express their views on the positive effects of professional development on their career advancement. Based on their responses, it was evident that teachers want to adapt to the digital age and be helpful to today's students, often referred to as digital natives. In fact, this finding is one of the key outcomes of the study. Teachers now believe in the necessity of being open to innovations in order to stay practical and effectively communicate with their students.

Teachers who think that using digital technology in lesson preparation and teaching process is quite useful for professional development have stated that they gain professional satisfaction as a result. Teachers state that they are satisfied because they can communicate better with their colleagues and school administrators in technical matters. In addition, teachers who think that their digital competence is strong believe it positively contributes to their academic development. These teachers, skilled in digital technology, expressed a personal inclination toward innovation and ongoing training, highlighting that engaging with technology—whether independently or through formal training—enhances their sense of well-being.

## 5.2. Discussion

Numerous studies support the critical impact of motivation on employee productivity and performance (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2021; Han & Yin, 2016). People with high motivation tend to be more successful in achieving goals. In the field of education, enhancing teachers' motivation is crucial for achieving teaching outcomes that drive success. Reduced motivation can lead teachers to encounter problems such as fatigue, burnout, and diminished professional performance. As a result of the research conducted by Sengar and Pandey (2024) in foundation universities, it was determined that there is a positive relationship between job satisfaction and employee performance. According to data collected from 250 teachers in the West Bengal region of India, the analysis of the research examining the relationship between teacher motivation and performance reveals a strong positive correlation between both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and teacher performance (Layek & Koodamara, 2024). Intrinsic motivation is important, but it is not sufficient for all the actions that people will perform. While intrinsic motivation is defined by Ryan and Deci (2000) as a person's natural tendency to explore and learn, extrinsic motivation is defined by Deci, Olafsen, and Ryan (2017) as a tendency to do an activity to achieve a concrete result. Extrinsic motivation focuses on instrumental or external behaviors. In fact, motivation for learning a second language is a situation where extrinsic motivation is more common because it is based on external factors other than the natural occurrence of the learning process (Berges-Puyó, 2023).

Increasing comprehensive pedagogical support in the creation of digital teaching is very important in increasing educator motivation. Studies examining the use of digital tools by educators in teacher education in Sweden, as well as the need for digital competence in higher education, concluded that teacher educators do not primarily use digital tools for pedagogical purposes. (Amhag, Hellström, & Stigmar, 2019). An investigation in Tanzania looked into what motivates teachers and how well they do their jobs. It found that teachers' low pay and a lack of incentives were two major external factors that led to low motivation and job dissatisfaction (Haidari, Gul, Valentinovna, & Vladimirovna, 2023). In a study conducted with teachers in schools in Bangladesh by Kumar and Hossain (2017) examining the effect of internal and external factors on teachers' motivation. It was found that attitudes towards external factors have a stronger effect on motivation than attitudes towards internal factors. The study also revealed that the motivation levels of the participating teachers were generally subpar.

Research on teachers' digital competence conducted after 2016 has shown that the concept is difficult to understand and poorly defined, resulting in extensive debates about how to conceptualize it and, in particular, which skills and abilities should be included in the field of education (Skantz-Åberg, Lantz-Andersson, Lundin, & Williams, 2022).

In a study that systematically reviewed the literature on digital competences and teacher professional development between 2008 and 2018, and mostly included qualitative research, the importance of digital competence is emphasized as one of the key challenges faced by today's teachers (Fernández-Batanero, Montenegro-Rueda, Fernández-Cerero, & García-Martínez, 2022). For teachers, digital competence not only involves the ability to use technology themselves but also requires meta-reflection on how technology relates to pedagogy and its impact on student learning in specific contexts (Sanders & George, 2017).

The OECD (2005) reviewed independent studies conducted in France, Australia, Belgium (French Community), Canada (Québec), the Netherlands, the Slovak Republic, and the United Kingdom and found that the primary sources of motivation for teachers' career choices were the desire to work with young people and the opportunity to contribute to society (Richardson & Watt, 2014). Similarly, a study conducted in Australia concluded that the most important factors influencing teachers' motivation were their perceived teaching skills, the intrinsic value of teaching, the desire to make a social contribution, the opportunity to shape the future of young people, and the chance to work with children and adolescents (Richardson & Watt, 2006). In their research, Wild, Enzle, Nix, and Deci (1997) observed that students' interest in learning was higher when taught by a teacher with intrinsic motivation compared to one with extrinsic motivation. A study examining the decision of prospective teachers in Malaysian public universities to choose a teaching career found that the reasons for their choice could be categorized into three main groups: intrinsic, extrinsic, and altruistic factors (Bakar, Mohamed, Suhid, & Hamzah, 2014). The results from the study show that altruistic factors (e.g., "to influence the next generation") were among the most dominant motivations. This was followed by intrinsic motivations (e.g., "Teaching suits my personality"), while extrinsic factors were the least influential motivations.

## 5.3. Suggestions and Limitations

These findings support the following recommendations:

The study was limited to public schools. The opinions of teachers working in private schools can also be taken, and the teaching profession motivation levels and career satisfaction of public and private schools can be compared.

The study determined the teaching profession motivation levels and career satisfaction of only some branch teachers. Similar studies can be conducted for teachers in other branches.

The study aimed to determine the teaching profession motivation levels and career satisfaction of elementary school, secondary school, and Anatolian high school teachers. In addition to this study, the factors affecting the professional motivation levels and career satisfaction of teachers in preschool, vocational schools, and sports and fine arts schools can be revealed.

## 6. Conclusion

Many factors, such as teachers' income levels, the adequacy of the physical environment of the institutions they work in, communication between administrators and colleagues, and student motivation, affect teachers' interest and motivation in the profession. Since motivation is a process in which mutual interaction takes place, it concerns all stakeholders in education. This study examines the factors that affect teachers' professional motivation and career satisfaction based on their perspectives, as well as explores the impact of teachers' digital competencies on motivation and career satisfaction. 11 teachers from different branches and school levels from different socioeconomic regions participated in this qualitative research. The results of this research indicate that a teacher who feels successful and fulfilled in the institution he/she works in will have increased career satisfaction and commitment to the profession. In addition, the teachers who participated in the research think that the positive communication they establish with their colleagues and school administrators contributes positively to their motivation and job performance. Teachers who see themselves as successful and respected accept that they always see themselves as open to innovations and

that they establish higher quality communication with their students and colleagues by adapting to the digital age. They explain that they pursue their professional development with intrinsic motivation, aiming to understand the language of the student and provide help that they believe will benefit the student's life. In this context, teachers attribute career satisfaction to moral values, not material ones.

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